

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1121

INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET DUTY ON FUNDS FROM ABROAD

REFS: A. MOSCOW 7925 B. STATE 134954

1. EMBASSY WILL FORMALLY INQUIRE VIA MFA USA DIVISION (BREMENT TO FEDOSEYEV LETTER) AS TO PRACTICAL EFFECTS AND APPLICABILITY OF NEW DUTY TO BE IMPOSED ON MONEY SENT TO SOVIET CITIZENS FROM ABROAD. WE ARE ALSO MAKING INFORMAL INQUIRIES AT USSR STATE BANK AND WILL QUERY OTHER CONTACTS.

2. FOLLOWING IS WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT PRESENT SYSTEM OF MONEY TRANSFERS FROM ABROAD. INFORMATION IS BASED ON PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE OF SOVIET JEWS WHO HAVE RECEIVED MONEY FROM U.S. AND ON MONEY-TRANSFER DOCUMENT PROVIDED TO EMBASSY BY JEWISH ACTIVISTS.

3. SOVIET CITIZEN RECEIVING MONEY FROM ABROAD IS NOTIFIED BY SOVIET BANK FOR FOREIGN TRADE (CONTROLLED BY USSR STATE BANK) THAT IT IS HOLDING A CERTAIN AMOUNT

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OF MONEY IN HIS NAME. HE IS NOT TOLD WHO SENT THE

MONEY (ONE OF COMPLAINTS OF RECIPIENTS IS THAT ARE NOT ABLE TO THANK UNKNOW U.S. DONORS) BUT MERELY THAT HE CAN COLLECT THE SUM IN RUBLES AT THE OFFICIAL RATE OR ALTERNATIVELY IN HARD CURRENCY COUPONS, WITH 35 PERCENT DEDUCTED FROM THE ORIGINAL SUM. PRESUMABLY A SMALL PERCENTAGE (ABOUT 2 PERCENT) IS TAKEN BY THE BANK FOR ITS SERVICES, BUT THIS ADMINISTRATIVE FEE IS NOT MENTIONED TO THE RECIPIENT.

4. IF SOVIET RECIPIENT CHOOSES TO RECEIVE HARD CURRENCY COUPONS (AND NEARLY ALL DO BECAUSE OF THEIR GREATER VALUE - UP TO 8 TIMES THE ORIGINAL SUM - OF THE COUPONS THEMSELVES OR OF THE GOODS THEY PURCHASE ON THE BLACK MARKET), HE RECEIVES A NOTICE FROM THE FOREIGN TRADE ORGANIZATION "VNESHPOSYLTORG" INFORMING HIM THAT HE MAY RECEIVE THE COUPONS (CALLED "SERTIFIKATY") AFTER FILLING OUT A FORM AND HAVING IT NOTARIZED. HE MAY RECEIVE COUPONS AT "VNESHPOSYLTORG" OFFICE OR HAVE THEM SENT TO HIM. THESE COUPONS ARE VALID FOR PURCHASES AT ORGANIZATION'S STORES AROUND THE COUNTRY. THIRTY-FIVE PERCENT DEDUCTION IS JUSTIFIED BY STATEMENT THAT PRICES IN THESE STORES ARE THAT MUCH LOWER THAN ON SOVIET MARKET. (IN FACT, MANY OF THE GOODS IN THESE STORES ARE NOT AVAILABLE ELSEWHERE.) INTERESTINGLY, "VNESHPOSYLTORG" DOCUMENT SEEMS TO LIMIT RECIPIENTS TO THOSE SOVIET CITIZENS WHO HAVE MONEY TRANSFERRED TO THEM BY RELATIVES LIVING ABROAD, BUT IN PRACTICE THIS HAS NOT BEEN FOLLOWED.

5. SOVIET CITIZENS CAN ALSO RECEIVE PERSONAL CHECKS DIRECTLY FROM FOREIGNERS VISITING COUNTRY. PROCEDURE IN SUCH CASES IS TO TAKE CHECK TO STATE BANK, WHICH THEN CLEARS IT THROUGH U.S. BANK AND LATER (USUALLY ABOUT TWO MONTHS) NOTIFIES RECIPIENT THAT IT IS HOLDING FUNDS FROM ABROAD. PROCESS DESCRIBED ABOVE THEN APPLIES.
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